

SHANTUMBU, ZAMBIA

Santumbu, Zambia, is a community about an hour by car from the capital city of Lusaka. Zambia is located in southern Africa. Formerly it was called Northern Rhodesia (Figure 1). The planning conference for this Human Development Project took place in November, 1976. Shantumbu is actually a set of about six villages located near each other.

The planning conference was preceded by several weeks of preparatory activity during which the facilities for the conference were obtained and set up. Since there were no hotels or rooming houses, the people who came in from overseas were housed in tents, two people to a tent (Figure 2). The tents and beds were loaned by the Zambian army (Figure 3).

The assembly tent, where we had our meals and where the plenary meetings were held, was a very large tent constructed out of large pieces of canvas (Figure 4). It took one afternoon just to construct this large tent (Figure 5).

The bathroom facilities were grass huts (Figure 6). The huts with grass roofs were the latrines. The huts without roofs were the baths. In each bath enclosure there was a large barrel of water and some concrete blocks to stand on. The procedure was to take a splash bath by dipping a cup into the barrel of water. There was a table nearby where the men could shave and where people washed their faces and hands. One advantage of these facilities was that one could work on one's tan while taking a "shower."

The day's activities were arranged so that the consultants and the community people ate all three meals together (Figure 7). We would get together in the morning for breakfast, and there would be an explanation of the day's activities. Then we would divide into five teams. The teams were a business team, an education team, an agriculture team, a cultural events team, and a housing and public services team.

The people who participated from the local community were selected by the local people. The consultants emphasized that they wanted a cross section of sexes, ages, professions, and religions. In this community the authority figures were headmen.

Each village had a headman and the older men made up a council that governed the village. Social status increased with age. Men could have more than one wife. Frequently a man would take one wife when he was young and then another, younger wife when he became older. It was not unusual for a woman to have seven children.



Figure 1. Map of Southern Africa



Figure 2. Tents in Shantumbu, Zambia



Figure 3. Children helping to set up camp



Figure 4. Building the assembly tent



Figure 5. A man attaching canvas to a pole



Figure 6. The bathroom facilities

How Villages are Selected

People often ask how the Institute finds a community to work with. Many of the members of ICA, at least the Americans, were originally trained in the ministry. They graduated from seminary schools. The Institute is closely connected with the World Council of Churches. Hence, their contacts with communities are often made through local ministers or active church members. The Institute does not go into a community that they have not been invited into. Usually the first contact with a community is through a one-day event like a Town Meeting. The Institute has conducted a very large number of Town Meetings. For example, in 1976, the two hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, they arranged a Town Meeting in every county in the United States. They have conducted thousands of Town Meetings around the world. In contrast to Town Meetings, Human Development Projects are only done in poor communities.

In order to be chosen as a site for a Human Development Project, the community must meet several criteria.

1. The community must be known in the surrounding area as being very poor. The idea is that if that community can change its circumstances, then surely other communities can as well.
2. The local people must want their community to be a human development project.
3. The village must be the right size. Two to four thousand people works well. If the community is too small, there are not enough people to work with. If the community is too large, efforts become diffuse and less visible.
4. The boundaries of the community need to be clearly defined so that there is no ambiguity about whether some people are in the project or not. A clear boundary prevents confusion over who is included and prevents diffusion of efforts.
5. The community should be easily accessible to a major international airport so that consultants and visitors can be brought in easily. A location that is not too remote also ensures access to medical facilities for the ICA staff.

Although many of the permanent members of the ICA staff are quite religious, they do not try to win converts to their religious views. Perhaps the most overtly religious thing they do is that they describe themselves as "those who care." They encourage other people to care about their communities by doing volunteer work. Mainly, they teach skills -- primarily planning and organizing skills, but also skills related to agriculture, business, health, and housing and skills in obtaining services and resources through liaison with government and the private sector and non-profit service organizations.



Figure 7. Beginning the day's activities over breakfast



Figure 8. Henry Tambo, a community leader

Learning about the Community

After breakfast and a plenary meeting to explain the day's events, people divide into groups to take field trips in the local area. On these trips the local people are the experts and the consultants are the learners (Figures 8 and 9). Shantumbu is an agricultural community. Tomatoes are a major cash crop (Figure 10).

In this part of Africa there are two seasons -- the rainy season and the dry season. In the past crops were only grown in the rainy season. But with irrigation the people have learned to grow crops year around. In fact the crops grown in the dry season are better than the crops grown in the rainy season

because there is less fungus and mildew in the dry season. In addition to tomatoes the people grow bananas, oranges, and corn (Figure 11). The plots of land in the foreground are small, whereas those in the background are larger. The land in the foreground is farmed by the native people with oxen. The land in the background is worked by a white farmer who has a tractor.

After the morning field trip we came back to camp, ate lunch and talked about what we had seen. During the first day we asked people what they would like to have happen in the community (Figure 12). They said that they wanted a local health center, a better water supply, better roads, and better schools (Figure 13). At these brain-storming activities in the afternoon, we frequently had some observers -- the children seemed to be fascinated by this unusual activity (Figure 14).

We made notes of what people said on a blackboard and then at night we typed reports on mimeograph stencils. We also wrote the results on large sheets of butcher paper which could be displayed at the plenary meeting the next morning. In this way each group could find out what the other groups had learned the previous day.

The next day there would be another field trip. Traditionally the houses were made of mud bricks with thatched roofs (Figure 15). The advantage of such houses is that they are biodegradable. If someone abandons a house, in time it collapses, forms a mound in the soil and then is eventually plowed over. In these small villages there is no private property. All the land is owned by the community. When a couple marries and decides where they want to live, they ask the headman and his council for permission to build a house in that village. If a family decides that they cannot get along with the people in one village, they move to another village.

Some of the newer houses have walls made of concrete blocks, concrete floors, corrugated iron roofs, and steel window and door frames (Figure 16). The materials are purchased with money obtained from selling agricultural products. The contrast between the newer and older style of construction makes it clear who the more prosperous people in the villages are.

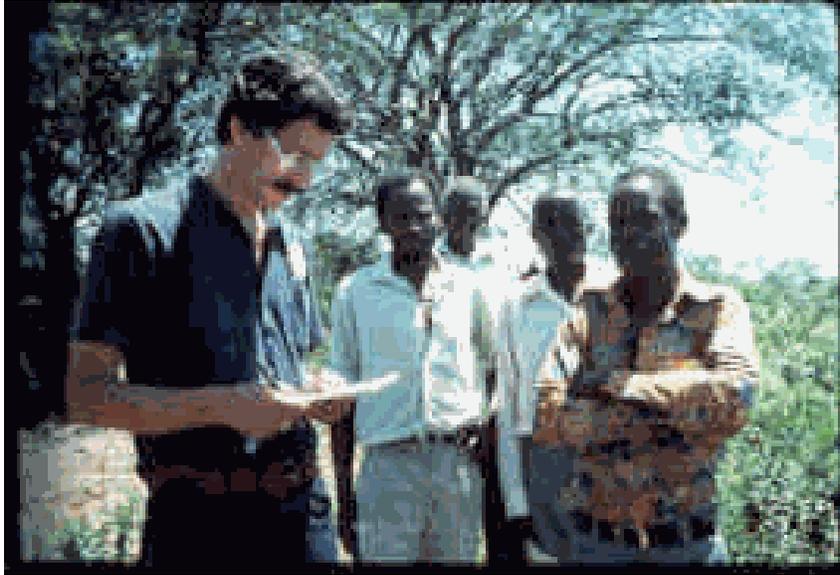


Figure 9. Taking notes

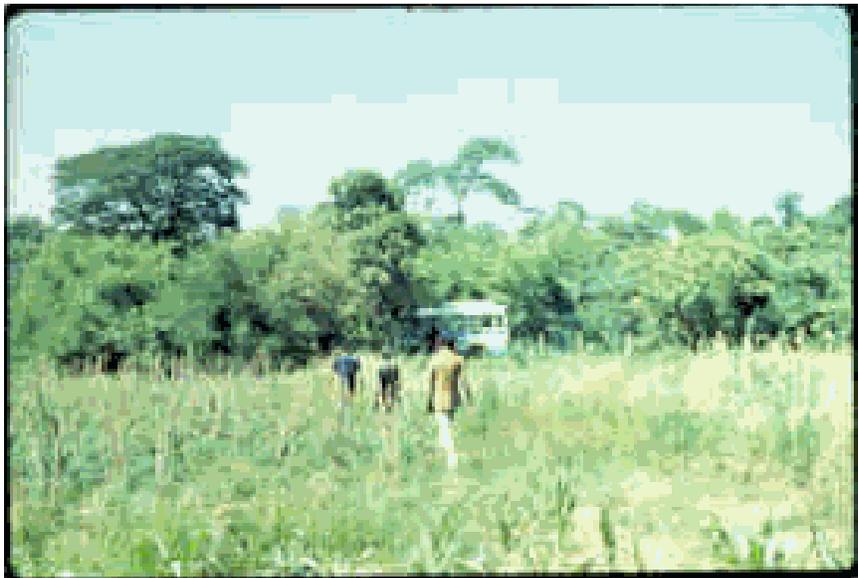


Figure 10. Tomatoes were a cash crop



Figure 11. Examining agricultural methods

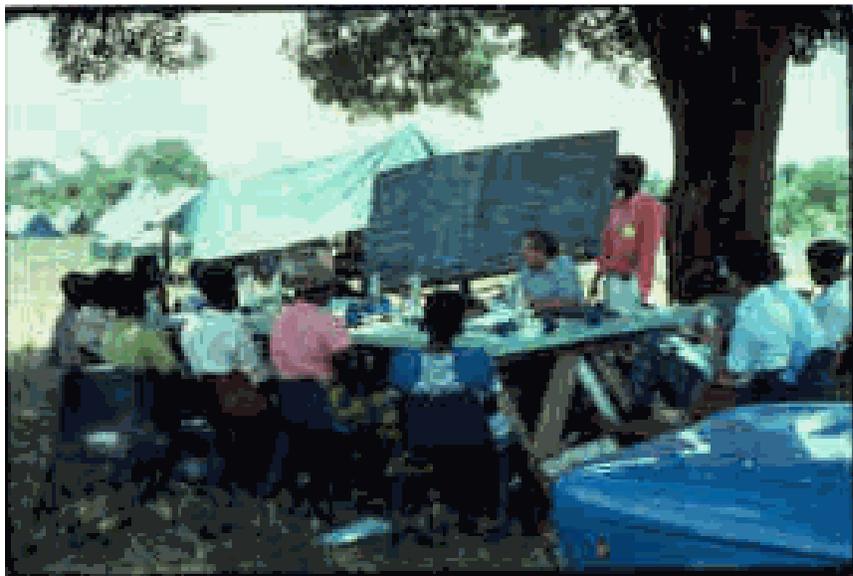


Figure 12. Lunch back at the camp



Figure 13. Discussing the morning field trip



Figure 14. Children watching the discussions



Figure 15. Traditional style mud houses

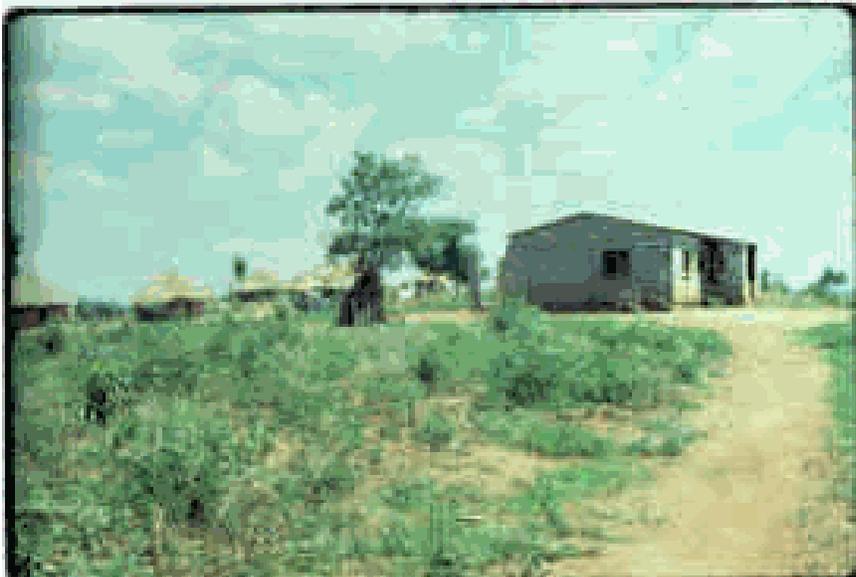


Figure 16. A newer house made of concrete blocks

A village sometimes consists of a cluster of houses around an open space (Figure 17). When one enters a village or a household compound, it is polite to stand on the perimeter where the grass stops until the people motion for the visitor to enter. The common courtyard is considered part of the structure of the village. In the afternoon many people sit outside in the shade of the houses and drink locally brewed beer. Alcoholism is a problem in these villages, as it is in most poor communities.

In the early days of the planning conference, we worked at night by candlelight (Figure 18). However, during the conference, a businessperson in town donated a generator and we had electricity. Typing outdoors in Africa by candlelight is a unique experience. Insects attracted to the light fly into the candles. In Africa, the insects can be quite large relative to North American insects. The dragonflies were awesome creatures. During the day, we encountered rhinoceros beetles and black and white striped millipedes about two inches long. One woman left her briefcase on the ground under her bed in the morning and returned in the evening to find that an ant colony was building a nest in it. As we worked at night, we could hear hyenas and other large animals in the distance.

The structures for housing domesticated animals were quite primitive (Figure 19). The animals were poorly fed and some of the children had open sores due to vitamin deficiencies. The sores could be cured simply by eating the tomatoes grown in the villages, but the tomatoes were regarded as a cash crop to be sold in the city. The doctor, who was one of the consultants brought in for the planning conference, organized an evening meal of tomato sandwiches for all of the children in the community.

The event began well, but there were so many enthusiastic children that the event quickly became chaotic with children grabbing for sandwiches and not waiting their turn. Most of the children found at least something to eat, though some of the food ended up on the ground. The doctor told the adults that each child should have tomatoes or some other vegetables every day.

The local diet consists mostly of corn with an occasional tomato, onion, or pumpkin. Only rarely do the people eat meat or fish. Meat is eaten immediately after it is slaughtered. The people say that there is no way to preserve meat in the village because there is no electricity to run refrigerators. They know about refrigerators, because they have seen them in the city. The people I talked to had never heard of preserving meat by drying it, salting it, or smoking it.

Water for irrigation is taken from springs, is trapped behind rudimentary dams, or is stored in tanks built of concrete blocks (Figure 20). On the field trips we found that many of the local people had not seen a concrete block tank before. Simply touring in their local community was an eye-opening experience for some of them.

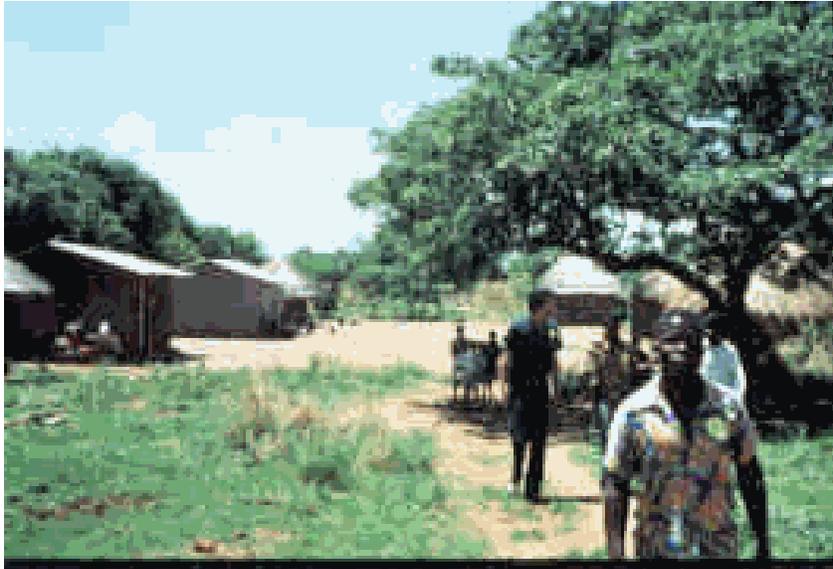


Figure 17. A village consisting of several houses

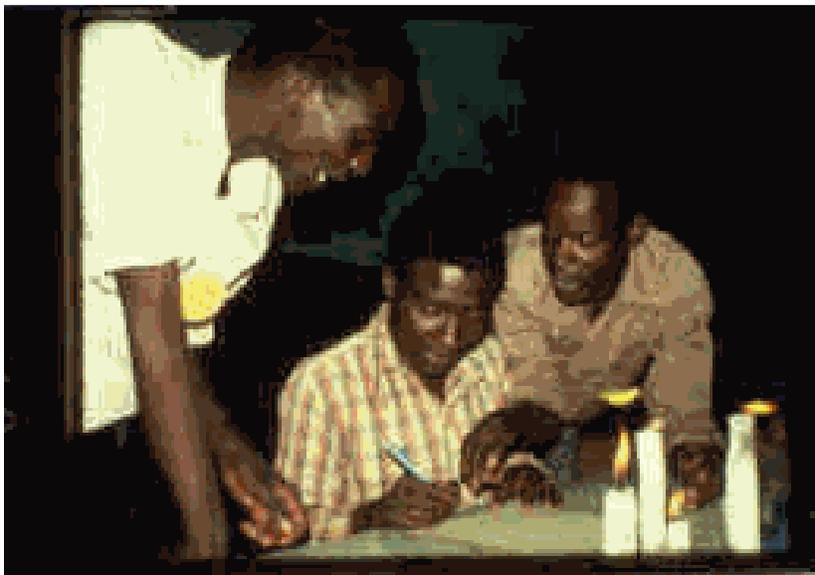


Figure 18. Writing reports at night by candlelight



Figure 19. Farm structures for pigs and chickens



Figure 20. A tank for holding irrigation water

The Effect of the Conference on Social Structure

When we visited a low earthen dam (Figure 21), one of the young men suggested that if the dam were raised to make the water deeper, fish could be grown in the lake behind the dam. The older village people in the group were unimpressed by the suggestion, but the consultants thought it was a fine idea.

The consultants pointed out the need for protein in the diet. After this conversation, the standing of this young man seemed to rise somewhat in the community. The consultants did not intend to disturb

the social structure of the villages. Indeed, in the beginning we did not know what the social structure was. Nevertheless, as the week progressed, it was clear that the patterns of communication within the community were changing. Those people who felt comfortable talking about change, innovation, and technology became more vocal and received more attention.

In this community there were three occupations in order by descending status -- shopkeepers, farmers, and charcoal burners. The shopkeepers had the highest status, even if their shops were nearly empty and they had few if any customers (Figure 22). Next, there were the wealthy farmers, then the less prosperous farmers. The charcoal burners seemed to hold the least respect. The charcoal burners would chop down the small, scrubby trees, partly burn the wood in a covered ditch, and then take the charcoal into town in large sacks precariously balanced on bicycles. The charcoal was used for cooking by the people in Lusaka. One shy, middle-aged charcoal burner attached himself to me and carefully watched everything I did. During the more boring parts of the meetings, I taught him the alphabet and a few English words. On the last day of the conference, he began speaking in complete English sentences. I was amazed. Since Zambia is a former British colony, the children are taught English in school, but most of the people in this community had had only a few years of schooling at most. Nevertheless, the translations back and forth between the tribal languages and English during the conference seemed to revive the English that this man had learned.

In our field trips in the community we saw how the people store their grain (Figure 23) and the depot where fertilizer and seed are brought in and harvested grain is picked up (Figure 24).

Clean water was a major problem (Figure 25). The people dug their waterholes by hand, so the holes were large. They were large enough for a man to go in and come out. They were often 15 to 25 feet deep. The holes were large enough for cows, children, and small animals to fall into. Large animals could be kept out by laying logs across the holes, but small animals often fell in and polluted the water.

What the people wanted was what they called "bore holes" or small holes drilled by machines mounted on the back of a truck (Figure 26). These holes were usually topped with a slab of concrete and a hand pump. Small animals could not fall into these wells, and the pump made it easier to raise the water. Such a pump was installed before the planning conference to insure a clean supply of water. It immediately became a community-gathering place.

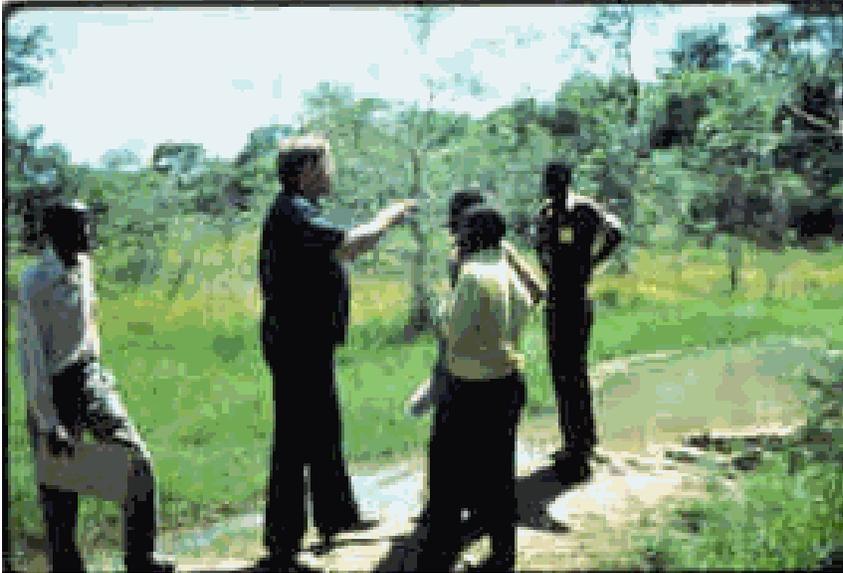


Figure 21. A dam built to hold water for irrigation

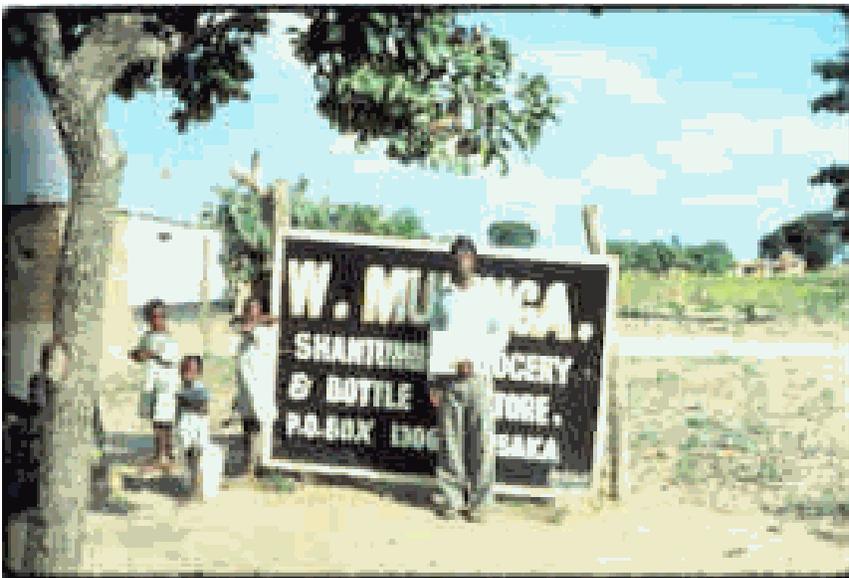


Figure 22. A local store owner and the sign for his store



Figure 23. A silo for storing harvested corn

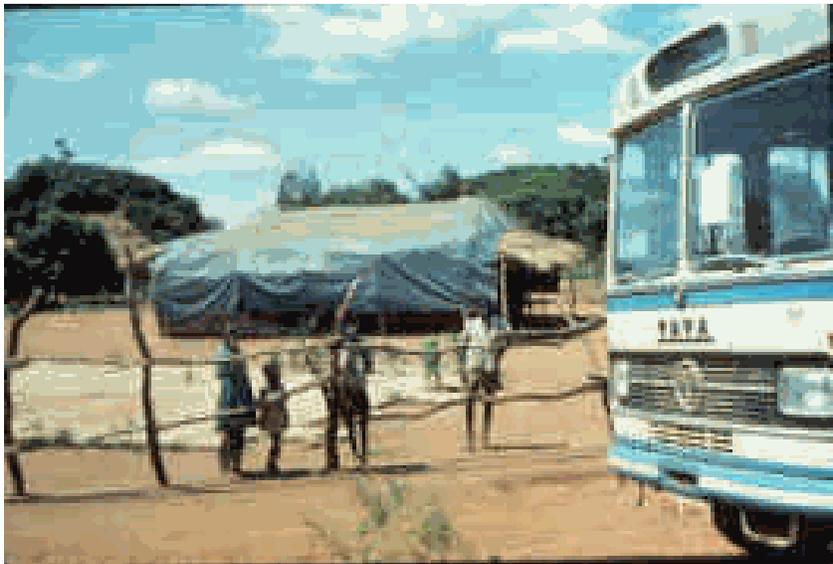


Figure 24. The depot for seed, fertilizer and harvested crops



Figure 25. A well dug by hand



Figure 26. A well drilled by machine

In Africa, the women and children carry the water. Often they have to carry it for a distance of one or two miles. All of the water used in the home for drinking, cooking, washing, and bathing has to be carried.

Topics Discussed during the Conference

On the first day of the conference we discussed the "vision" the people had for the community and what they wanted to see happen in the future. When one asks villagers such questions, it is important to wait for an answer. This is a question most villagers have not thought about before. They need time to think through the question.

On the second day we asked a rather controversial question. If this is what the people in the community want, why do they not already have it? That is, what are the "obstacles" to achieving the vision? Often people blame someone else, such as the government, for their troubles. When this happens, the consultants ask them what they could do to take charge of the situation. For example, in this community the dirt roads were a problem. The people said that the government rarely came out to grade the roads. The consultants asked whether there was a committee that was in charge of communicating with the government to insure that the roads were graded regularly. The people said that there was no such committee and then added that even when the road grader did come out to grade the roads, it left before all of the roads were repaired. The consultants asked whether the road committee could go around with the road grader and make sure that the work was done correctly and completely. The people said, "Yes, that could be done." The consultants then asked, "Will you do it?" The people, enthusiastically now, said, "Yes, we will."

The consultants stress that by organizing themselves and working together, much can be accomplished. Frequently discussions of contradictions raise issues of mutual trust. For example, the people in this community wanted a local health center so that people would not have to walk or ride a bicycle several hours into Lusaka for health care. At one time, the people took up a collection to build a health center. They entrusted the funds to one of the local shopkeepers who used the money to build an addition to his house. The man was never prosecuted. People just refused to do business with him. From this incident, the people concluded that they could not trust each other. When this story was told, the consultants explained that it is possible to open a bank account that requires two or more signatures before funds can be withdrawn. They asked whether such an account would solve the problem of raising money for a health center. The people said they thought it would.

Blaming and distrust often emerge as themes during the discussion of obstacles or contradictions. The task for the consultants is to bring these issues out into the open and then show that these problems can be solved.

On the third and fourth days we took field trips outside of the community. Whereas on the first two days the consultants learned about the community, on the third and fourth days the consultants and the local people learned about the resources available to the community. I led a small group to the University of Zambia where we met a professor in the business school who was willing to arrange for people to come out to the village to teach business skills such as accounting. We also met a Pakistani agronomist who was looking for some farmers who were willing to experiment with growing wheat in addition to corn. After returning to the village I typed a report on the people we had met (Figure 27). Typewriters and mimeograph machines were kept in a metal hut at night to protect them from theft and fire. One afternoon one of the latrines was accidentally set on fire by a cigarette (Figures 28 and 29).

In the afternoon of the third day we discussed "strategies" for removing the obstacles to achieving the vision. Strategies could include selecting a committee to manage the maintenance of the roads and establishing a committee to open a bank account and to collect money for building a health center.

On the fourth day we discussed "tactics." What steps needed to be taken in order to implement the strategies for removing the obstacles to achieving the vision? For example, in the case of a bank account, the people needed to decide who would be in charge of the bank account. Those people needed to learn how a bank account operated. They then needed to choose a bank to work with. They also needed to arrange transportation into town.

On the fifth day, we drew up a schedule of activities indicating who would do what and when and how much each activity would cost. Each group was also asked to prepare a song for the closing celebration (Figure 30). The Zambian National Dancers, who have given performances around the world, came to the village for the closing celebration.



Figure 27. Recording notes on a trip to the University of Zambia



Figure 28. A latrine catches fire



Figure 29. Cooling the embers



Figure 30. Practicing songs for the closing celebration

Stories, Songs, and Symbols

Symbols are a very important part of the Institute's methods. For each Human Development Project they work with the local people to design a symbol for the community. The symbol is usually a stylized map. The symbol becomes readily identifiable to people both inside and outside the community and serves as a reminder of boundaries. The symbol is used on reports, on products, and on meeting places.

The story that a poor community tells about itself often describes how times were better in the past and how bad things are today. As long as people tell such stories about themselves, there is little hope that they will make dramatic progress. So the story is rewritten to emphasize positive events and to praise the courage, hard work and resourcefulness of the people. Part of a positive story is that this community is serving as an example to other communities of what can be accomplished by working together. The new story is retold frequently at celebrations and community meetings. Since people often like to sing at gatherings and as they work, the Institute uses songs to convey the new story. The songs use tunes from popular local songs, but the words are rewritten to tell the new story of the community.

After the planning conference several days are spent writing a report that describes the vision, contradictions, strategies, tactics, and implementation steps that were discussed and agreed upon (Figure 31). Every report on one of the human development projects is organized in the same way – story, vision, obstacles, strategy, tactics, and actions (Figure 32). By reading these reports one can learn what the major problems are in poor communities around the world, whether rural or urban. One comes away from such a reading with a better understanding of the nature of poverty and the underlying similarities of poor communities in very different countries.



Figure 31. Studying the data while writing the report



Figure 32. A copy of the report on Fifth City, Chicago